

# **HISTORIC TOURS**

## **OF**

### **NEWARK, NJ**

**Saturday, September 21, 1991**

**Tour Guides:**

**Charles F. Cummings, City Historian**  
**Elizabeth Del Tufo, Newark Boys Chorus School**

**Text:**

**Karen Gilbert, The Newark Public Library**  
**Bernard Flanagan, The Newark Public Library**

# BRANCH BROOK PARK

The very first County Park in the United States is located in Newark's North Ward. Branch Brook Park, comprising some 486 acres of land, with over 35 acres of lakes and streams, has recently been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This part of Newark has always been an open area. During the Civil War, it was the location of Camp Frelinghuysen, a military training camp. In 1871 the Newark Aqueduct Board built the City Reservoir in the southern section of the park area. Part of the land was unofficially known as Blue Jay Swamp, owing to the damp, unhealthy quality of the land.

In 1885 the City Fathers decided to turn the entire area into a park, and in 1895 the Essex County Park Commission, the first such group in the nation, was created. The park site was turned over to the Commission, which was given the actual job of remodeling. To design and landscape the park, the Commission hired Frederick Law Olmstead, the architect of Central Park in New York City and Prospect Park in Brooklyn. When he retired in 1900, the work was continued by the firm comprised of his brother and Frederick's two sons. The first year, the original 60-acre site was enlarged to 300 acres, partly by purchase, and partly by the donations of land by public-spirited Newark families, notably the Ballantines and the Hellers, who lived in the vicinity.

By 1900 flower beds and walks were in place, and the old Reservoir had become Branch Brook Lake, a facility for water sports as well as aesthetic beauty. Work had begun on Sacred Heart Cathedral, a French Gothic masterpiece that would lend beauty and charm to the Park. The people of Newark had already begun to use the park for relaxation and recreation.

Styles in recreation vary over the years, and Branch Brook Park has offered almost every kind of public sport. Among the early facilities was a playground and wading pool for the children, a special grove for handicapped children, baseball and cricket fields available on a permit basis, and a place for outdoor concerts and special events such as Newark's first Fourth of July fireworks display, held in 1904. In 1900 a greenhouse was built, and used for both cultivation of special flowers and as a public attraction. Branch Brook Lake was equipped with canoes for hire and space for privately-owned canoes. At one time a huge fountain graced the center of the lake. In winter, the lake was frozen for ice skating, and both daytime and moonlight skating were immensely popular.

In 1924, the park grew by another 20 acres, and this was used for a golf course. By the late 1920's tennis courts were a going concern. With the coming of the automobile, the roadways in the Park were paved, for the enjoyment of Sunday drivers and commuters lucky enough to enjoy a bit of beauty on their way to work.

In 1927 came a donation which was to begin a Branch Brook Park tradition. Mrs. Felix Fuld, sister of Louis Bamberger, donated funds to purchase 180 flowering cherry trees. Since then, the number of trees has grown to 2,000, including some exotic Japanese varieties. Each April, when the blossoms appear, thousands of people come to the Park on foot, by car, or by bicycle. An annual festival is planned around this stunning natural event.

In modern times, with the emphasis upon Nature as an anecdote for modern city doldrums, Branch Brook Park has continued in importance as a recreational center for the city. The boats are gone from Branch Brook Lake, and the skaters now have their own indoor rink for all-year fun. The park has been the scene of such up-dated activities as a "Love Festival" for young people and a "Freedom Walk" complete with yellow ribbons, to honor the hostages in Iran. Sports in the park now include football, jogging, and the Italian game of bocce.

In 1979, exactly 84 years after its first meeting, the Essex County Parks Commission voted to transfer all of its park property and duties to the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs. Using Federal,

Green Acres funds as well as State and County funds, the Department has inaugurated a major renovation plan for Branch Brook Park. Included in this plan is the dredging and cleaning of Branch Brook Lake, renovation and re-opening of the boathouse, reconstruction of the park's roads, and re-seeding of fields and ballfields to restore a natural setting.

This \$4 million, 5-year project will bring new life and vigor to Branch Brook Park. Hopefully, the lake will once again be open for small boats. Fish can again be placed in the lake, for ecological purposes and for the pleasure of urban sportsmen. But, most of all, the beauty and pleasure of a day in Branch Brook Park will continue to be available to Newarkers and visitors from other communities, for years to come.

# COLLEGE TOWN

Newark first became a college town in 1747, when the Rev. Aaron Burr, Sr. founded the College of New Jersey to train young men for the ministry. Several years later, the college was moved to Princeton, where it grew into an Ivy League university. In Newark, which was developing into a major commercial and industrial center, all types of courses continued to be available on a limited basis. In 1946 Rutgers the State University, took over the little-known University of Newark, making it the Rutgers-Newark campus. Another college already in the City was the Newark College of Engineering, which had been upgraded from a technical school in 1919.

But the true re-emergence of Newark as a college town came in the late 1960's, when 320 acres of blighted area near the downtown section of Newark were cleared to make room for a huge educational complex, to be occupied by four separate colleges. The ultra-modern buildings were designed by the architectural firm of the Grad Partnership. A special agency, the Council for Higher Education in Newark (CHEN) was formed to co-ordinate such services as health facilities, bookstores, and transfer courses for the four institutions. The four schools co-operating in this unusual complex are:

**NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**, the oldest of the four, began holding classes in 1885 as the Newark Technical School. In 1919 college-level courses and a degree-granting program were begun, and by 1930 it had become the full-fledged Newark College of Engineering. In 1949 it was moved into the historic building which had been the Newark Orphan Asylum. The school trained thousands of students for careers in chemical, civil, electrical, industrial, and mechanical engineering, and in 1967 ranked seventh in the United States in Engineering degrees granted. In 1974 a School of Architecture was added, and the institution's name changed to New Jersey Institute of Technology. It now occupies five modern buildings. Its Library-Humanities Center contains shelving for 150,000 volumes and seating for 500 students. It is equipped with modern facilities, and includes over 800 periodical subscriptions offering the latest in scientific information.

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY** came to Newark in 1946, when the State took over the 10-year old University of Newark. This university included the New Jersey College of Pharmacy, the New Jersey Law School, the Dana School of Business Administration, and the Newark Academy of Arts and Sciences, the last having been affiliated with New York University. For the next twenty years, Rutgers classes were held in the former Ballantine Brewery buildings, razor-blade factory, the YMCA, several old mansions, and space rented from Newark business firms. The new ultra-modern Rutgers campus was begun in 1958 and opened in 1966. Its three-story Dana Library has capacity for 200,000 volumes and seating for 700 persons, and also houses the Institute of Jazz Studies.

**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER**, like Rutgers, is the Newark branch of a suburban university. In 1952 Seton Hall moved its urban branch, consisting of law, nursing, and general studies, from Jersey City to Newark. In 1967, however, all except the law school were returned to the South Orange campus, and the entire university became co-ed. The law school moved into its new quarters in 1976, adding another major facility to the college complex and the cultural life of the City. Presently its new headquarters is nearing completion in the center of the City's Gateway complex.

**UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY OF NEW JERSEY (UMDNJ)** was opened in 1956 as part of Seton Hall University's extension in Jersey City. However, financial difficulties resulted in State takeover of the school in 1964, and a move to Newark in 1968. Today the school occupies a modern facility on Bergen Street, along with the completely new College Hospital, its teaching hospital. Aside from their educational function, the school and hospital provide essential health services to residents of the inner city.

**ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE** was founded in 1966 as part of the State system of public two-year colleges. Housed in a series of ultra-modern buildings on High Street, the College offers local students an alternative to the traditional 4-year college program.

Three decades ago, Newark's beautiful College Complex was a dream, and now it is a living reality. It offers a wide variety of college experience to many inner-city and local students who cannot afford or do not wish to live on a traditional campus. The colleges also play a major role in Newark's physical and cultural revival. They attract many distinguished teachers into the city, who in turn offer cultural, medical, legal and other services to the community at large.

# SYDENHAM HOUSE

Sydenham House is the oldest privately-owned residence in Newark, and one of the two oldest buildings still standing in our city.

Some time around 1700, young John Sydenham came to Newark from England. He soon fell in love with a local girl, Susanna Handcock, and the couple eloped in 1712. When Susanna's father became reconciled to the marriage, he gave the couple a piece of land on the road later known as the Old Road to Bloomfield. The Sydenhams began farming, and the house, or at least part of it, was built by or for them in 1712. The present house, of stone with a clapboard top story, contains fourteen rooms and is actually two houses joined together. The actual record of its building is unknown.

The house remained in the Sydenham family until some time in the 1930's. Miss Laura Sydenham, last of the line, sold it to Dr. G. Rae Lewis, and the house was occupied by his two sisters-in-law, the Misses Edith and Elsie Topping.

The third and present owners acquired the house in 1955. Mr. D. J. Henderson, an engineer and one-time Chief of the Division of Traffic Engineering for the State Highway Department, and his wife Elizabeth, a former social worker, bought the house with the intention of restoring it to its original appearance. At that time the home was run-down and almost uninhabitable. Over a thirty-five year period, making only the most necessary concessions to modern comfort, the Hendersons have re-created an authentic 18th century dwelling. Much of what we see is the work of their own hands. The Hendersons visited many historic homes in New England, collecting ideas for their own restoration. When antique shops could not supply suitable items, the couple made their own. Mr. Henderson built furniture and made candelabra and other such items, while Mrs. Henderson set up a floor loom and wove towels, placemats, and napkins such as Susanna herself may have used. Mrs. Henderson also glazed all the windows, helped remove old paint, and created original ceramic pieces, to decorate her home. In pleasant weather, the couple worked together to restore the garden as an attractive setting for the Colonial house. This was truly a labor of love, for the Hendersons collaborated on the extensive historical research involved in a project of this type.

The Hendersons received statewide and national recognition when their house was placed on both the State and Federal Registers of Historic Places. Beside the kitchen door, a plaque designed and worded by Mr. Henderson tells the history of the house. But perhaps the greatest satisfaction for all of us comes from the Hendersons' twofold achievement. They have successfully recreated a house from the past, while making it their own charming and comfortable home.

# SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL

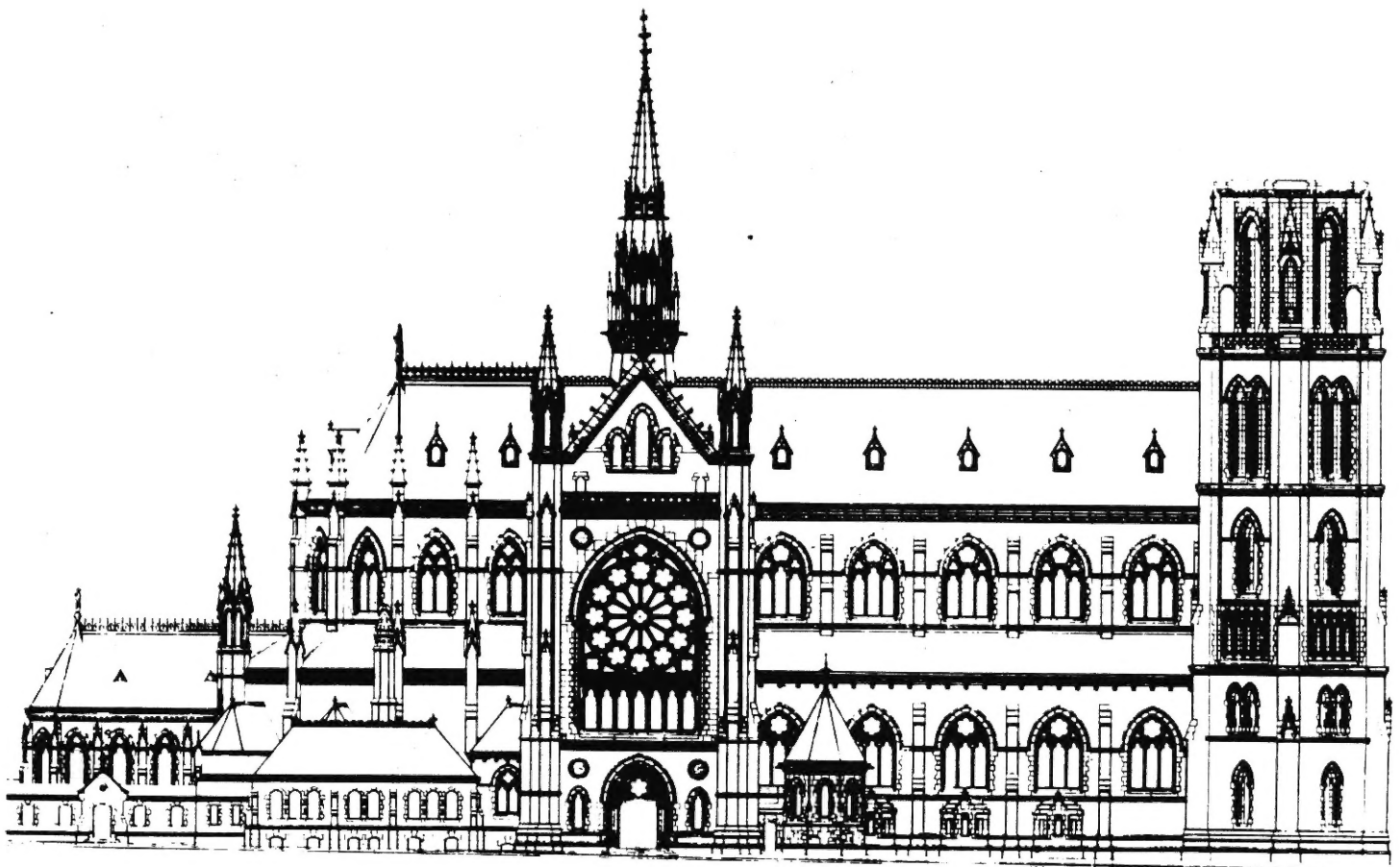
Newark's Landmark Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, was started in 1898 and finished in 1954. It is one of the western Hemisphere's best examples of French Gothic architecture, and is built in the great cathedral tradition of Rheims, Chartres, and Laon. It is 365' long, 165' wide and its two diagonal towers, are 232' tall. A magnificent fleche marks the crossing and rises to a height of 260'.

Its exterior construction is of the finest New England granite and Pennsylvania Brownstone. The interior walls are of Indiana limestone as are the vaulting ribs, transept screens, and narthex screen. The nave and ambulatory columns are granite with granite capitals. The vaulting is constructed of sturdy Guastavino tile.

The 206 Cathedral windows are from the designs of Gonippo Raggi and were made by the famous German firm of F. X. Zettler in Munich. The three great rose windows each contain 1,000 square feet of glass - The Southern rose is the second largest in the United States and is 35' in diameter.

Bronze entrance doors from Rome, Bells from Padua, 25 carved altars of Italian marble, mosaics from Venice, chandeliers of czechoslovakian cut glass, and richly carved screens and statues of Appalachian white oak contribute to th Cathedral's "old world" charm.

Newark's famous ecclesiastical architect, Jeremiah O'Rourke drew the original plans and under his direction the walls and two front towers were partially erected. His successor, I. E. Ditmars revised the plans, rebuilt the column foundations and erected the columns, completed the exterior walls, redesigned and erected the fleche, built the crypt; and enclosed the building. Paul C. Reilly completed the interior, designed the transept and narthex screens, and designed the plaza and Bishop's residence. Gonippo Raggi & Sons of Orange, New Jersey designed and furnished the interior appointments.



NORTH SIDE: CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART, NEWARK, N. J.

Jeremiah O'Rourke & Sons, Architects.



# NEWARK'S "WARS OF AMERICA" MONUMENT

One of America's largest and most unusual sculptures is located in Newark's historic Military Park. The "Wars of America" group was dedicated in 1926 to honor soldiers in all of America's great wars from the Revolution to the First World War.

The monument was made possible by the bequest of Amos Van Horn, who in the 1860's was one of Newark's leading furniture makers. When the Civil War broke out, he sold his business and volunteered to join Company A Volunteers, Twenty-sixth Regiment, where he saw active service for three years. Upon his return to Newark, re-entered the furniture business and was very successful. Although rich, he was very modest, and gave much of his time and money to charities. He showed profound interest in the welfare of former soldiers and the activities of the G.A.R. His sense of patriotism and public spirit led him to bequeath to the City the funds to erect three great war memorials: the Courthouse Lincoln, the equestrian Washington, and the Wars of America Group.

The Wars of America Monument was created by one of America's greatest sculptors, Gutzon Borglum. This Idaho-born artist had studied in Paris with the great Auguste Rodin, and his hallmark was a departure from traditional forms. Borglum's works included the renowned Presidential faces on Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, and Newark's Courthouse Lincoln. For the War Memorial to mark the nation's 250th anniversary, Borglum rejected the traditional lone soldier or abstract patriotic symbol, but chose instead a group of forty-two figures, which to him represented the spirit of America's Wars. The group is placed upon a hill, representing America's upward struggle. In the forefront are four officers, in the uniforms of the four great wars, and behind them are their brave soldiers and sailors, some leading the horses which will take them into battle. The group of figures at the rear show another aspect of war. Here we see young soldiers bidding fond farewell to their families, the fathers offering strength and encouragement, and the mothers, wives, and young children who must wait at home. One poignant figure is that of a father comforting his daughter whose husband has just joined the colors. The viewer must gaze long at this sculpture to hear the many stories it has to tell.

For his models, Borglum used many of the faces he knew, as well as several noted Newarkers. Amos Van Horn, the donor, appears as a Union soldier, as does John Purroy Mitchel, a former Mayor of New York. Borglum molded his own face on one father figure, his son as a young soldier, and his little daughter among the children.

The monument is the largest sculpture in this country, being 42 feet long and 18 feet wide. The base contains over 63 tons of concrete and the bronze sculptures weigh about 30 tons. Its size, uniqueness, masterful workmanship, and great historic significance make the "Wars of America" one of Newark's outstanding artistic treasures.



# WASHINGTON PARK

The green triangle we know as Washington Park was originally planned by the founders of Newark. It was first used as a market and horse trading center. The retreat of American troops through Newark during the Revolution provided the inspiration for re-naming the North Common after the Victorious General.

Sometime in the mid 1800's, commercial activity in the area declined, and the market became a park as we know it today. At the turn of the century the area became a fashionable residential center with the leaders of commerce, industry and the professions building stately mansions all around the park. Most of these were taken down as the area again turned commercial, but a few remain. The careful observer can still examine the Polhemus and Fewsmith houses. The most notable home in the area is the Ballantine mansion, which has been acquired by the Newark Museum and is being restored to its original appearance. The restoration of the first floor interior is complete and open to the public.

Washington Park is also a center of commercial and cultural activity. Close to the City's university complex, it is the location of Newark Public Library and the Newark Museum. The Library, located here since 1901, occupies a Renaissance style building which is of great architectural interest. The Museum, organized by Librarian John Cotton Dana in 1909, moved into its present building in 1925. This building was built with funds donated by Louis Bamberger, who also founded one of the City's leading department stores.

Three churches of great historic and architectural significance add to the cultural life of Washington Park: the North Reformed Church, the Second Presbyterian Church, and the First Baptist Peddie Memorial Church. Each of these has a long history closely interwoven with the City's own.

Although some of the buildings which added charm to Washington Park are gone, they have been replaced by major banks, insurance companies, shops and the Veterans' Administration building, all of which assure the continuing importance of the area to the City.

# MILITARY PARK

The history of Military Park is the history of Newark itself. It is, along with Washington Park to its north, one of the few surviving creations of the Puritans who founded Newark in 1666. When the town was laid out, this triangle of open land was set aside as a military parade ground. Military training was compulsory for every male citizen between the ages of 16 and 60. Training drills were held daily, as well as full-dress parades on special occasions. In 1736, a famous religious controversy caused the town's second church, Trinity Anglican, to be built on the parade ground. During the Revolutionary War, the little church was used as a dormitory and shelter for the many soldiers who trained there. When the war ended in 1793, Newark's Liberty Pole was erected at the southern tip of Military Park, and a great celebration was held there.

Early in the nineteenth century, the training place was no longer needed for military purposes, and so it was converted into a public park. Shade trees were planted, and walks were laid out. Trinity Church, now Episcopal, was re-opened and re-dedicated. In 1804 work began on building the present church, which preserved the original steeple and some of the masonry. In 1944 this church became Trinity Cathedral, the center of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. Military Park became a favorite place for rest and recreation as the surrounding area gradually changed from residential to commercial.

Despite its relatively small size, Military Park is home to four historical and artistically important monuments. In 1880 a statue of Gen. Philip Kearny was placed in the park, followed in 1895 by one of Frederick T. Frelinghuysen. In 1898 a cannon, captured during the Spanish-American War that year, was brought to Newark. Military Park, by virtue of its name and history, seemed the ideal location for such a monument, so here it stands. The park's most outstanding sculpture was dedicated in 1926. This was the Wars of America Monument, created by Gutzon Borglum as a tribute to all of America's servicemen and their families. This unique group of forty-two figures is well worth a few minutes of the visitor's time, for it has many stories to tell.

In the late 1940's the downtown Newark streets had become so congested that automobile parking was a problem. It was suggested that an underground garage be built below Military Park. After more than ten years of discussion and planning, Military Park Garage was opened on August 1, 1961. The park was thoroughly cleaned and re-planted, and the walks and lighting were modernized. Today the three-level garage accommodates 1,019 cars, while Military Park remains an oasis of history and relaxation in the heart of downtown Newark.

# NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Library's roots extend back to the very beginnings of the city. It is said that Newark's founders were learned men who brought books along with their other possessions to their new homes. The practice of lending books was widespread between friends, and extending to students, parishioners, and others. By 1797 Newark had a subscription library, operating as a business and charging fees for membership and borrowing privileges.

In the late 1880's, Americans recognized the need for free public schools and libraries. The City of Newark organized a Library Board of Trustees, which bought the building and collections of the subscription library. The Free Library was officially opened on October 17, 1889.

The present Library building, Newark's third, was built in 1899 and opened to the public on March 14, 1901. Designed by the Philadelphia architectural firm of Rankin & Kellogg, it is an outstanding example of the Renaissance Romanesque style of architecture. Its main architectural feature is a central open lobby rising three stories to a skylight in the roof. Around this lobby are rooms of varying sizes, which accomodate the collections and activities of a busy city library.

As one might expect, the Library's collections were ever growing, and by 1931 the building was becoming too small. Plans were made to expand its space while retaining the architectural beauty of the original building. Book stacks and additional reading rooms were added to the rear of the building. In 1950 a second building was erected behind the original library. Over the years, this has been used for storage of overflow and duplicate books, and by 1989 all the non-public services had been relocated there. These include book ordering, cataloging, and preparation of new books for public use.

While remaining in this historic building, the Newark Library has expanded to meet the changing tastes and needs of the people who use it. Certain areas in which our collections are strongest have been separated into individual departments. These include books for children and teenagers, art and music materials, science, social science, and New Jersey and local information. A general core collection includes some information on almost every other conceivable subject. Through the years these collections have been expanded, separated, re-combined, and moved, to reflect the library needs of a changing society. Other innovations have been adopted to keep Newark Library abreast of modern developments in the library world. In 1964 Newark became the Metropolitan Area Reference Center, providing reference assistance to many smaller libraries in the region. In 1979 computerized cataloging was begun, using the Ohio College Library Catalog (OCLC) system, which was being adopted in many large libraries across the United States. This system greatly speeds the ordering and cataloging processes, and assures standardization within this Library system as well as with other libraries of comparable size and function.

As Newark Public Library reached its Centennial year, yet another program of renovation and modernization was begun. The entire fiction collection was moved to the first floor, and the Black and Hispanic Book collections were placed in two large rooms on the first floor. Several other departments were re-organized and moved, allowing for future expansion and easier access by the public. The entire Library building interior was re-painted, and the public reading areas were carpeted and refurnished.

In September of 1991 the TopCat computerized catalog arrived at Newark Library. This system enables patrons to use computers to locate any book in any department or branch of the library. As this is being written, a new computerized charge-out system is being prepared. This will increase efficiency and enable a librarian or patron to see whether a book is in or out, and when it will be returned. These are only a few examples of how the Newark Public Library is using the latest state-of-the-art technology to better serve the public.